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The University of
Montana

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NEWS RELEASE

This release is available electronically on INN (News Net.)

Aug. 22, 1997

Contact: Bill Farr, (406) 243-7700.

(For schedule, see enclosed sidebar.)

UM CONFERENCE LOOKS AT GUTHRIE'S BIG SKY 50 YEARS ON MISSOULA--

Stephen Ambrose, an expert on the Lewis and Clark expedition, will be among the noted authors and historians in Missoula next month for a conference at The University of Montana to explore the relevance today of issues raised by Montana writer A.B. Guthrie Jr. in his novel "The Big Sky."

The conference, "A.B. Guthrie's 'The Big Sky' -- After 50 Years," will be held Thursday, Sept. 11, through Sunday, Sept. 14, at various campus venues. Presentations will explore the literature, history, environment, changing culture and public policy of the West. All events are free and open to the public.

"In sponsoring the conference, the Center for the Rocky Mountain West wanted to do two things," said Bill Farr, associate director for humanities and culture: "Revisit A.B. Guthrie's life and work and at the same time use it as a springboard to explore the issues and themes Guthrie raised, namely the kind of cultural and environmental challenges that we in the West continue to impose upon ourselves."

"Superficially, I think Guthrie's novel is dated. But the book is essentially about change and

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people's reaction to change, and those are very contemporary issues in Montana."

Highlights include a talk Saturday by Ambrose, author of "Undaunted Courage," the award-winning account of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Ambrose's talk, "The Friendship of Lewis and Clark," will begin at 7:30 p.m. in Urey Lecture Hall.

Montana State University President Mike Malone will discuss "A.B. Guthrie: A Remembrance and An Appreciation" starting at 7:30 p.m. Friday in Urey Lecture Hall. Malone authored "Montana: A Contemporary Profile," published in 1996.

Kicking off the event Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in Urey Lecture Hall will be a showing of the movie "The Big Sky," filmed in 1952 and starring Kirk Douglas. James D'Arc, curator of the film archives at Brigham Young University, will introduce the film.

Daytime conference sessions feature notables such as writer James Welch of Missoula, historian John Jackson of Olympia, Wash., and former Congressman Pat Williams, senior fellow and regional policy associate at the Center for the Rocky Mountain West. Sessions will meet at the Milwaukee Station 9 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m.-noon Sunday. Each session will conclude with a panel discussion and question/answer period.

The Montana Committee for the Humanities will host a reception from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Friday in Brantly Hall.

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Note: To arrange an interview with Stephen Ambrose, call Hugh Ambrose, (406) 443-7943.

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UM GUTHRIE CONFERENCE SCHEDULE (sidebar)

MISSOULA--

Thursday, Sept. 11 -- Showing of the movie "The Big Sky," 7:30-10 p.m., Urey Lecture Hall.

Friday, Sept. 12, 9 a.m.-noon, Milwaukee Station -- Session titled "A.B. Guthrie and the Literature of the West." Presentations include "'The Big Sky' and the Siren Song of Apocalypse," by Ken Egan, Billings; "The Last Best Place: Economic Opportunity of Wilderness Solace?" by O. Alan Weltzien, Dillon; and "'Murders at Moondance' and the Evolution of A.B. Guthrie's Fiction," by Fred Erisman, Fort Worth, Texas.

1-5 p.m., Milwaukee Station -- Session titled "The Big Sky, The Fur Trade and the History of the West." Presentations include "'Fools Crow' and 'The Big Sky': Western Changes From Two Sides," by James Welch, Missoula; "Alone on the Range: Individualism in the Midst of Agricultural Restructuring," by Lorelei L. Hanson, Lethbridge, Alberta; and "Godamighty, We Haven't Event Counted All the Plews Yet: A Historian's Reaction to Closing the Door on the Myths," by John C. Jackson, Olympia, Wash.

5-6:30 p.m., Presidents Room, Brantly Hall -- Reception hosted by the Montana Committee for the Humanities.

7:30-9 p.m., Urey Lecture Hall -- Evening lecture, "A.B. Guthrie: A Remembrance and

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An Appreciation," by historian Michael Malone, president of Montana State University and author of "Montana: A Contemporary Profile."

Saturday, Sept. 13, 9 a.m.-noon, Milwaukee Station -- Session titled "The Environment of the West." Presentations include "Mountains on Center Stage: How Guthrie Put a Montana Spin on Environmentalism," by Dan Flores, Missoula; "The Rise of Environmentalism and Its Relation to Western Myths," by Lee Rostad, Martinsdale; and "The Continuing Struggle to Preserve and Protect Tribal Homelands," by Jeanette Wolfley, Pocatello, Idaho.

1-5 p.m., Milwaukee Station -- Session titled "The Changing Culture of the West." Presentations include "'Guthrie's Grizzly,' 'Grocery List' and Other Tales of Choteau Life," by Jo-Ann Swanson, Great Falls; "Guthrie's 'Shane' and American Culture of the Cold War," by Richard Hutson, Berkeley, Calif.; and "'The Big Sky': In the Heart of the Heart of the Text," by Bill Bevis, Missoula.

7:30-9 p.m., Urey Lecture Hall -- Evening lecture, "The Friendship of Lewis and Clark," by historian Stephen Ambrose, author of "Undaunted Courage."

Sunday, Sept. 14, 9 a.m.-noon, Milwaukee Station -- Session titled "Public Policy in the Changing West." Presentations include "Is the West Growing Up?" by Daniel Kemmis, Missoula; "Montana's Partner, the Federal Government," by Pat Williams, Missoula; and "The Humanities and Public Affairs," by Mark Sherouse, Missoula.

All events are free and open to the public.

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